

Victoria Street Newz

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The Privatization of the Disadvantaged

by Bob Sharounne

I'm Disabled (this is God's will for me) and I will never be employable, and I live in total poverty for absolutely no good reason.

Let's look back to 1975, the social safety net paid 105% of the poverty line. Today disability rates are 50% below the poverty line. What changed, and is there a saving to taxpayers? The answer is No!

In 1975 a Disabled person had a guaranteed income, that was adequate enough to cover food, housing, and a little disposable income to improve quality of life.

Today those direct incomes to the disabled and others have been systematically lowered and privatized. The reason why is that poverty is a multi billion dollar industry, that just begs to be exploited and managed for profit. Plus we all know the poor are a parasitic, unworthy life form, and as such must be kept in line, at any and all costs.

Its like I have a bounty on my head, anyone who talks to me gets funding, yet if I need anything it's not in the budget.

These caregivers and the like get travel expenses, (I stay home) catered meals (I get the food bank), dental plan (extractions for me), and a great paycheque plus a 2010 legacy grant to ask the disabled how accessible the public toilets are for my disability. I asked for a computer and was told no, but if I were a non-profit the answer would be yes. How about a real pension and I'll hire whom I like.

Food banks started as a well-intentioned gesture of kindness but it has gradually become a way for the province to off load welfare payments and redirect cash flow to a few large corporations. Here is how it now works.

continued on page 3



Photo above: An enterprising Chinese man pushes his bicycle loaded with recyclable plastic containers for resale to a nearby depot in Shanghai. REUTERS/Claro Cortes.

below: Two enterprising binnners push a cart loaded with recyclables through the sloppy streets of wintry Victoria.

**You can help support local binnners by sponsoring
a custom built bike cart. Contact Tony @ Tonystailers.com.**

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Distribution Coordinator: John Chomyn
Deliveries: Nancy Raycroft
Advisory Committee: Brian Mason,
Colin Dower, Jennifer Hastie, Lisa Helps,
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We are devoted to a triple bottom
line philosophy - concerned about
our environmental and social, as
well as financial, well-being.

You can contribute to social change
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causes of poverty, and by working
for peaceful, non-violent change.

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mailbox at:**

**1027 Pandora Ave
Coast Salish Territory
Victoria, B.C., V8V 3P6**

**250-383-5144 ext 0137
streetnewz@islandnet.com**

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information about us, can be
found are at

relativenewz.ca



JUST ANOTHER RANT

I cycled home from the January 10th peace rally, through the rain-soaked residential neighbourhoods, glad to be back on my bike after all that crazy winter weather, thinking about what to write for this, the February rant. There's a lot of talk about finance and the world economy and the pending depression (some would argue it's been in the making for many years already, the natural end times of gluttonously greedy capitalism), and I decided I'd write an essay letting folks know how the Street Newz stands by comparison.

But I couldn't help thinking about the pro-Israeli flag flying folk who tried to take over the peace rally. We gathered to show solidarity with the people of Gaza, they got wind of it and tried to drown us out. It's tough to imagine anyone would actually go public supporting the continued genocide and absolute destruction of Palestine (Israel having no defined borders), but there they were. Usually, those who endorse genocide do it quietly and diplomatically. But this day they appeared to be actively promoting the continued suffering and murder of innocent people, children among them.

The next day I received an email with a link to a short video that blew my mind. A group of people, complete with a cappuccino machine and a Danish film crew, stood on a hill overlooking the fires of Gaza. The conversation was this:

"They chose Hamas to rule them, it's their fault, they got it to where it is now."

"Don't you think it gets worse bombing them?"

"No I think that is the only solution, I think they should just clear off all the city, just take it off the ground. I'm a little bit fascist."

I suppose we could be thankful that some zionists are finally being honest rather than hiding behind a really old document (it's thousands of years later, folks, there are 2.5 billion of us, time to evolve!), or the pains suffered in the holocaust, or whatever other justification is mustered to explain away today's atrocities. Thanks to Keren Levy, an Israeli Realtor, we now know the truth - or part of it, anyways. She's a little bit fascist, and she doesn't have a problem with that.

I reached for the texts and essays I read and wrote while enrolled in "The Holocaust in History" at UVic in 2001. Keren reminded me of Hermann Bielowlawek whose speech to the Vienna City Council, in 1902, was titled "Yes, we want to annihilate the Jews." He said "we will ... take every opportunity to announce to the world that the people of Vienna are honest, Christian, and pure German, but that it has as its program: the elimination of Jewry." Apparently his words were greeted with "approval and applause," much like Keren's Zionist, Imperialist, Capitalist, Realtor sentiment is endorsed in the comments section of the youtube site (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjw8U0AcH4Q).

I re-read some of the articles from that 3rd year history course, and was reminded that eugenics was a huge part of that particular holocaust. Experiments were conducted on gypsies, the handicapped, those with 'mental disabilities,' or perceived "inferior intelligence and other social disabilities."

The term 'eugenics' was coined way back in 1881, by British and American scientists. From my Literature studies I remembered that Mary Shelley scribed Frankenstein (which oughta be prescribed reading for every science student on the planet) some years earlier, in 1818. Prior to the discovery of DNA, some eugenicists were obsessed with proving a relationship between low intelligence, immorality, and crime. They considered poverty a hereditary degeneracy, also race and ethnicity. Early research was funded with Carnegie, Harriman, and Rockefeller money. In 1907 Indiana enacted

janinebandcroft.blogspot.com



the first sterilization law, by the mid 1930s "more than half of the states had passed laws that authorized the sterilization of 'inmates of mental institutions, persons convicted more than once of sex crimes, those deemed to be feeble-minded by IQ tests, moral degenerate persons, and epileptics.'"

Sterilization was the first solution, euthanasia the next.

In 1920 Germany, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche published "Die Freigabe der Vernichtung Legensunwerten Lebens (Authorization for the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life) in response to the 'problem' of institutionalized handicapped patients in Germany. During the '30s the Nazi regime created laws and regulations to further their eugenic and racial program, and those scientists opposed, or those with the wrong ethnic background, were fired.

"There was no effective resistance," historians noted.

What's really changed? Any attempt to contemplate, or critically examine, the motives of the nuclear powered, imperialist Israeli government (and their supporters) meet with "anti-semite" or "self-hating Jew" name-calling. Too often critics surrender to these intimidation tactics and shut up for fear of losing their livelihood - or their lives.

One Israeli woman (is she really a woman maybe the frankensteinian experiments, channeling wandering souls into physical bodies, were more successful than we've been told!) stood on a hill watching unimaginable pain and suffering and calmly called for the destruction of an entire people.

I can't just let go of that, and I'm not afraid to say that's a really bad attitude. It's the same attitude as "ANNIHILATE THE JEWS," or "BURN THE WITCHES," or "BASH THE GAYS," or "ENSLAVE THE BLACKS," "BUTCHER THE NATIVES," "PLUNDER THE EARTH," "PRIVATIZE THE COMMONS," "FORCE THE GYPSIES INTO SHELTERS," "KILL THE CRIMINALS," "DETAIN THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS," etc. It's hatred, and it's most commonly found (disguised) in the 'right-wing' of the political spectrum.

And when the victims fight back from their oppression they're called bitchy wives (burn her!) or anti-semites (shut them up!) or terrorists (wipe them out!) or tree huggers (imprison them!) or anti-poverty activists (torture them!).

It's just strange to celebrate and encourage anybody's nefarious intent, and I, for one, will not be silenced. Go ahead, send me hate mail (don't take it out on the vendors). I can take it ... I'm a woman ... I'm used to misogyny ... sugar-coated or otherwise.

p.s. Pending any major emergencies, or a sudden insane desire to achieve a high society lifestyle, Street Newz will live for another year thanks to the Cooperators, a very kind elder gentleman who tired of donating to large organizations with lots of overhead, and plenty of other individual donors. Thank you all, very sincerely, for your contributions! And a big thanks, too, to all who keep this project alive - the vendors, the writers, the volunteers. Viva la Revolución!

Sources:

Benno Müller-Hill, "The Idea of the Final Solution and the Role of Experts," in The Final Solution: Origins and Implementations, edited by David Cesarani, 1994: Routledge.

Friedlander, Henry. "Chapter 1: The Setting," in The Origins of Nazi Genocide. USA: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Bielowlawek, Hermann. "Yes, We Want to Annihilate the Jews!," source: Speech to the Vienna City Council, from Amtsblatt der k.ki. Reichshauptund Residenzstadt Wien, Gemeinde-Sitzung vom 10 Dezember 1902, pp. 2298-301.

OPINION Want to Fix our Electoral System? by Adam Saab

When parliament resumed in Ottawa last month we were hopeful to see a more peaceful parliament come back to the House of Commons. When they left in 2008 there were allegations of undemocratic behavior from both sides. The Liberal and NDP coalition were accused of "overturning the results of the last election" while the Conservatives were accused of "failing to respect the results of the last election" and consequently loosing the confidence of the House.

Could they both be right?

Democracy implies that in some sense every citizen will be both free and equal, but beyond that 'democracy' is a strongly contested concept, mainly because it is so popular that everyone will try to link his or her ideology to democracy. As a result, western democracy's short history has gone through quite the rapid evolution, showing no signs of slowing down, at least not for most countries.

In an effort to increase the equality and freedom of each citizen over 70 countries around the world have adopted a proportional representational voting system much like the BC-STV electoral system we will be voting for during this next provincial election in May. In fact, STV (single transferable vote) has been adopted with great

success in countries such as Ireland, Australia and Malta. These countries don't squabble about the democratic validity of parliamentary behavior as much as sharing and compromising, something we British Columbians like to believe we are so adept at.

The current system often makes voters choose between the candidate they want to win and a candidate who has a better chance of winning. BC-STV gives voters the ability to list who is their first choice, second choice and so forth. Vote counting is done in rounds and the candidate with the least voters after each round is removed. If a voter selects an independent candidate or a less popular candidate who is eliminated, their vote will count towards their second choice. Generally, voters will be able to rank two or more candidates from the same party, though they are also free to rank candidates from more than one party if they wish.

As a whole, Canada has not made any significant changes or updates to its democracy or electoral system since 1867. Times have changed; we need to change along with it. This May, vote for a better democracy and vote for BC-STV.

For more information check the website: stv.ca

Privatizing the Disadvantaged cont'd from cover

In 1975 the poor had the funds to purchase their own food. Stores in 1975 that had dented cans, out of date breads and dairy products, meats and over ripe vegetables, would dispose of these items in dumpsters. Today these once waste items are literally turning into gold. Waste is now sorted by trained employees and are scanned at the cash registers, and 80% of the value of every item is now considered as a tax-exempt donation, valued in the multi millions of dollars.

Note: My local food bank hands out food only once per week and by that time 90% of perishable foods have now totally expired. One month I was given 5 large bags and ended up with only two edible tomatoes and a big shock to me was two cans were over 6 years out of date. I've asked my local health branch to inspect the food bank, request denied! Please allow me to afford to eat fresh again and it will cost the taxpayer not one-penny extra, but the savings will be in the multi millions to the health care system, and the stores can still have sales profits rather than tax exemptions. PS: I don't drink, smoke or take illegal drugs, so I don't need to be managed like an animal.

In 1975 welfare shelter allowances where adequate, homelessness was almost unheard of. The free market had government incentives to supply rentals. Then welfare rates where frozen. Inflation over the years made it more profitable to turn apartments into condos. Now we have homeless shelters but with no surprise (to me) they are funded at \$33,333.33 per mat on the floor, per year, (the following web-site shows BC spending \$50 million on 1,500 shelter beds/mats - www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2008HSD0104-001667.htm).

Compare that to the maximum \$375 per month or \$4,500 per year a single disabled person could get for rent. Why such a vast difference, and are those mats a cost savings? The answer is No! Could it be as simple as the government wanting the poor to find religion? The largest shelter provider is a "Army" for Jesus, its goal, "Salvation." No thanks!

The new housing solution in now called "Supportive Housing and Shelters" and this means poor people have guards, costing in the hundreds of millions. For about 10% of the poor this makes perfect sense due to mental illnesses and addictions, but for about 90% of the poor this means big brother is watching and freedom be damned, but this however is all about big business and thousands of well paying jobs.

News flash on CBC radio Dec 30/08: Tuberculosis is spreading rapidly amongst the homeless in the BC interior. "The general public need not fear, it's just happening to the homeless." Yes poor people have shorter life spans being homeless, good is what a lot of you reading this story will say, its not a secret or a uncommon thought, it's just not politically correct to get caught saying what so many really think.

Our economy is based on a pyramid system with money running from the bottom to the top. The new twist in BC is the hiring of 45,000 foreign workers bypassing all our own citizens. Have you ever heard of a homeless or hungry foreign worker? The answer is No! How about training Canadians rather than casting the poor and unskilled onto the streets to die. BC is spending \$55,000 per year, per homeless person, think about that, it cost far less to give a Doctor a free education than it does to keep a person homeless!

Shelters are registered as non-profit organizations and as such public records are impossible to find. I have however found 3 articles for 555 Homer Street Vancouver. This property is owned and operated by the Salvation Army of Canada and Bermuda. Yes Bermuda is the offshore Banking capital of the world, read whatever you like into that fact. The public information I've attached is I feel typical of how money is spent in the name of the poor and Disabled. Watch how much money changes hands starting Jan-2003 to Apr-2003 to Sept-2004, draw your own conclusions!

Jan-2003 (vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20030114/a5.htm): City of Vancouver buys the Dunsmuir building at 555 Homer for \$3 mil and sells it to the Salvation Army for \$2 mil. The City of Vancouver gives a \$225,00 property tax exemption---Welfare, Corrections Canada, Health Board etc, gives the Salvation Army \$19 million for renovations plus \$1 mil from the city—plus from BC Housing promises to pay off \$3 mil on the Salvation Armies 35 year mortgage....

Apr-2003 (www.cmhc.ca/en/corp/nero/nere/2003/2003-04-04-0900.cfm): Salvation Army gets \$16.2 million for new development---\$6.3 annual operating expenses---\$390,000 affordable housing grant--\$1 million from city of Van---\$1 million from community partners....

Sept-2004 (bcc.rcav.org/04-09-27/index.htm): In this story the Salvation Army has taken \$23.3 million from the Morris and Helen Belken Foundation to fund the very same building at 555 Homer Street Vancouver.

Now factor in other private donations, rents, homeless shelter rates of \$91.32 per night per bed/mat plus treatment fees, plus, plus, plus.

There can be no doubt that at least 10% of the poor and Disabled need a "Supported Housing Program," but for the other 90% like myself we are forced into girding relentless poverty, caused directly by the Privatization of Social Programs. The cure for homelessness and so many other social problems is a return to the 1975 guaranteed income rates. The free market will build homes if the disadvantaged have the means to pay. Stimulate the Economy and remember whenever a dollar changes a hand 3 times, then every penny goes back to the government! Give the disabled a real livable pension and don't call it welfare. Hire the poor and disabled as consultants. We have great ideas to share and all we ask for is our dignity.

This article was submitted anonymously. There are many stories of abuse and corruption told within the street community, but they're often reluctant to go public for fear of retaliation.



The Mother of Invention

A young homeless couple has shown us all up. The homeless were evicted from camping under the tree a while ago by police. If I recall the interim mayor acting as spokesperson for the city on the eviction of the homeless from the park by police said that the parks were there for use by the taxpayers. I guess that means that the parks are not for use by some rich, the poor, children, pets, and most retired people who don't pay taxes. Something here about freedom of movement and discrimination come to mind. One day the scene at the park looked like this:



A little snow and some creative ingenuity and voila! "Necessity is the Mother of Invention." How can you smash up such a cute display of creative snowmen to evict a young homeless couple? The public relations backlash would make heads roll all the way to the top. These two earn the "Most Creative Homeless Political Action of the Year" award.

Instead of persecuting people like this we should be venting our anger on the greedy who got us into our current economic woes. Perhaps we should hire the homeless to replace our high level economic advisors. At least they have their hands on the pulse of the economy and have brains.

From Dragonslayer - Saanich

Are we prepared for a flood of new homeless ?

The economic signs are ominous. As a result of the Sub-prime Mortgage Crisis, bank credit has dried up. Due to unavailable credit, sound businesses are forced to close. Unemployment has jumped. We can expect the situation to worsen.

Due to the high debt loading and lack of savings, many who lose their jobs could become homeless. Is Victoria City Council, Gordon Campbell and the Harper government planning for a probability in the jump in homelessness?

Perhaps the time has come to consider the Guaranteed Livable Income to rid ourselves of homelessness and to stimulate the consumer economy directly rather than bailing out the banks and GM. The Guaranteed Livable Income will go a big way to correct the current mal-distribution of wealth.

To pay for this, perhaps we need to consider clawing back some of the tax cuts given to the very rich Canadians since the late 1990s when drastic cuts were made to government services resulting in huge surpluses.

The tax system has been used to systematically transfer budget surpluses, which represents in the increased wealth produced by workers, to the very rich. Perhaps now is claw back time to reduce the rapidly increasing wealth gap between the very rich and workers.

Those in poverty, the homeless, and those threatened with homelessness are crying out for social justice. I support them.

From Gerry Masuda, Duncan

An Opinion About the Prorogue

So why don't the elected Liberals, Bloc, NDP, and the two Independents go to Parliament Hill and begin meeting, after inviting the Greens to fill 23 of the seats vacated by the Conservatives, to represent the percentage of votes they received? Are they so convinced of their servile imperialist status that they can't take over our Parliament?

If the Conservatives want to stay out, let them. And if the Governor General objects, we should remind her that as a former Haitian who did nothing when the democratically elected Aristide government was overthrown by American, French and Canadian troops sent by Paul Martin, her responsibility is not to the Queen of England. It's to the people of Canada. And that we are quite able to govern ourselves without her.

Jim Erkiletian, Nanaimo

After 2010: Report back from the Olympic resistance in Vancouver

by Zoe Blunt

The 2010 Olympics are over, and we're told that everything is back to normal. Wrong. Vancouver will never be the same.

Never mind what the news jockeys said about the thrilling celebration of our nation's proud heritage, showcasing our city, hosting the admiring elite of the world, promoting our youth, and attracting new business and tourism. It's all bullshit. For us here at ground zero, the Olympics turned the Lower Mainland into a nightmare landscape of security zones, armed troops, and police traps. And guess what? The nightmare didn't end when the circus left town.

The past two months have seen chaos and repression so secret that we're still trying to piece together the whole story. It's ironic, because we've been trying to expose this sort of abuse for years – part of the campaign to keep our city livable, support human rights and end police persecution of everyone who's poor, native, or critical of government priorities. When we witnessed what was happening with the latest round of evictions and brutality, we felt compelled to get the story out. Then, of course, we became targets too.

Even after all the discussions and predictions, we weren't prepared for the scale of the crackdown. It went like this: dozens of arrests the week before the Games started, forced removal of homeless people for the duration, indigenous people targeted and independent journalists singled out – as many as they could get their hands on, anyway. Before the Olympics even started, a bunch of us were preemptively – arbitrarily, illegally – detained under the new security orders. Doors were kicked in, cameras, videos, and computers were seized, and people were taken away and disappeared. Without so much as a peep from the major newspapers, TV, and radio stations.

And yet, we pulled ourselves together and carried on. That's what we need to do now – seize the moment, hang on to our experiences and analyze what happened, if only to bring some perspective to the chaos. Let's start with the successes.

The huge throngs of people at the public protests in and around the "free speech cage" were amazing to behold. Apparently the Homes Not Games message hit a nerve. That nerve was pretty sore already after the bank collapses and thousands of layoffs, plus the revelations about secret budgets, high-

profile scandals, more evictions, and, of course, the ever-swelling Olympic deficit that our children will still be paying off in thirty years. Then came the massive, never-ending traffic gridlock and the troops in the streets. The hubris of it all added up to a whole lot of pissed-off citizens. So naturally, the protests spilled over into the streets.

Not just protests, either. Months of planning focused on empowering people to start building the kind of society we need. Like Food Not Bombs, the Homes Not Games actions were organized by people who found ways to fill those needs themselves, rather than waiting around hoping the authorities would give a hand-out. These decentralized non-organizations stymied the police – with no headquarters for them to raid and no leaders to arrest, they didn't know how to stop the movement. Several individuals in the network got busted the week before the Games, but they had the good sense to keep their mouths shut about their fellow activists.

The affinity groups were also tight – people took their safety and security very seriously. The scene was so heavy that anyone who was not 100% committed to the goal stayed home. After the first wave of raids and arrests, no one needed a reminder of what was at stake.

The folks who set up the legal defense fund in advance of the Olympics deserve a huge shout-out, along with the lawyers who are working for free or for reduced rates. Hundreds of people are facing charges – anti-poverty activists, indigenous people, tree huggers, indy journalists, and dozens more who were probably just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The people who went missing have been found, some of them in jails fifty or a hundred miles away. Some might get time served or a few weeks if convicted, others are looking at "terrorism enhancements" of many years behind bars, even though there was clearly no intention to hurt anyone.

Civil liberties advocates are hoping to push back the trend of police brutality and Charter rights violations. The criminal trials will be going on for months, and believe me, they're educational (and open to the public!)

The media collectives and solo journalists deserve awards for extreme bravery in documenting dozens of cases of police attacks and human rights abuses with hundreds of hours of video – and getting away with the footage! Of course, the major media didn't run those videos, but the web streams went around the world to millions of viewers. And the hot new "instant documentary" is coming any day now – the video posse is working round the clock putting it together. There's dozens of clips online already, and a whole pile of new material that the cops are really going to hate – especially when the lawyers show the evidence to the judge and get our friends' charges dropped.

We learned some things about playing to our strengths and their weaknesses. We outwitted the enemy a couple times. We outran them too. We are quicker, smarter, and more versatile than the crowd-control units. We know the terrain. We can switch to Plan B in an instant. They need orders. They're weighed down by riot shields and command structures. Except when they get wound up in their adrenaline and testosterone frenzy, and start beating on people at random. All I can say is thank god for the street medics.

The street medics are fu**ing heroes. They waded into clouds of tear gas to help people who were blinded and panicked and disoriented and walked them out of there. They patched people up in the middle of the night and kept it quiet. Of course, a lot of people who were near the front lines – including the medics! – are still nursing injuries and pepper-spray after-effects. Plus, we are all suffering from "post traumatic activist stress disorder" – weeks later, some folks are still traumatized and in shock. No one expects this shit to happen to them. But people are taking care of each other and reaching out to each other.

The extreme level of police coercion stunned everyone. Even long-time activists who felt

psychologically prepared for police violence told me how surreal it felt, suddenly finding themselves looking down a line of automatic weapons aimed at their heads and robocops barking incomprehensible orders. Everything slows way down and gets very bright and sharp. Impossible to forget, even if you want to. Many of our comrades from the past few weeks won't be returning to the movement – they're burned out.

Our public events were infiltrated by police informants and many of us were monitored for months before the Games. The cops pulled all kinds of petty stunts – faking people's identities online, sending messages to try and start conflicts, playing on the divisions within the group like race and class and gender. Fortunately, it seems like the various affinity groups were quick to catch on, although a few out there are probably still figuring it out.

Surveillance cameras and face-recognition software made it easy for the cops to look out for possible "domestic threats." (Threats to what? We'd like to know!) They watched for certain individuals and pounced on them when they approached the security perimeters. Obviously, you can fool the software with a bandanna, but they also arrested anyone with their face covered.

We weren't expecting the total blackout on dissent for the duration of the Games, or the crushing media backlash after the party ended and the guests went home. Obviously we didn't think corporate Olympic sponsors would give indy journalists free air time – but we thought at least we'd have access to our own blogs and independent media sites! A lot of those sites suddenly went off-line (or off-limits) in early February. A lot of cell phones stopped working, and some folks swore they were being recorded. We had to keep figuring out ways to work around these obstacles.

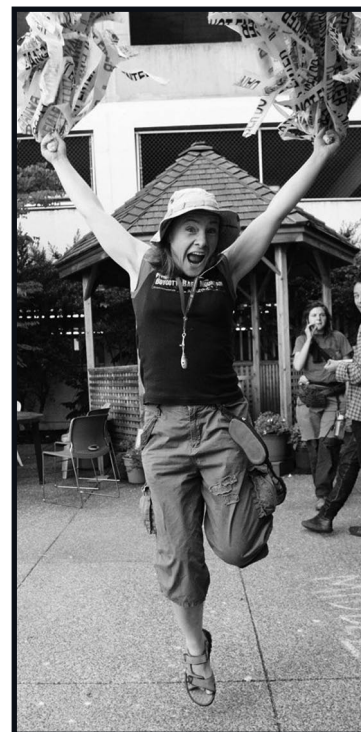
The radicals were isolated, thanks in part to intimidation and pressure on our more moderate allies. That was no surprise – we figured the mainstream groups would cave if the authorities leaned on them, and that's what happened. They cooperated with the detectives and cut their ties with us. So we were basically left out in the cold, surrounded by hostile forces. Several of our demonstrations were outnumbered by the pro-Olympics cheerleaders and sports fans; there were lots of vocal threats and even a few violent incidents as they lashed out at the groups of peaceful protestors.

By the time it was over, there was a backlash from all sides against the people who were trying, against all odds, to get a message out to the world, to speak to the conscience of a nation against racism and brutality and homelessness and injustice.

And we won. We got the message out, and we all came together, and that was what they really feared, above all. Not just that we would loudly and publicly dissent for the world to see, but that we might actually join forces and work for common goals, like hastening the fall of this corrupt and unjust system.

It started for me when one of us asked – what sort of position do we want to be in, after the Games? How do we survive, evade, and resist the occupation? The TV cameras have packed up and left. The soldiers are back at their bases. We're still here. What next?

Zoe Blunt is a journalism school dropout living near Victoria. This is her first piece of creative non-fiction. Read more of her writings at zooblunt.gnn.tv.



The Joy of Dissent

Friday, February 13,
Camas Books
(2590 Quadra St, Victoria)

5 pm - potluck with Food Not Bombs
Celebration of the Bear Mountain Tree Sit and
The Joy of Dissent

6 pm - The Stimulator, Live!
Frank "The Stimulator" Lopez of subMedia.tv
discusses "Media Activism in a Police State" and
fills us in on how he got the story,
and got away with it too.

Find out why we're recruiting "video ninjas" to
report on the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

7 pm - "Ground Noise & Static"
subMedia and PepperSpray Productions' video about the crackdown on dissent at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions (30 minutes) followed by more discussion.

8 pm - Live Beats and Jams
with the Outspoken Wordsmiths, dancing and socializing 'til 11 pm.

Plus - retro bike auction, 50/50 draw, fine art raffle and lots more!

All ages - accessible - admission by donation.

Proceeds benefit
subMedia (submedia.tv)
and Forest Action Network (forestaction.ca).

More info: zooblunt@gmail.com

crisis in Boom Town
(or, the real face of the New Recession)

by j. fisher

you could fall in love with this city at a quarter to 5 in the am on a cold December morning. dark, bleak and silent, it is the only remaining time of the day that permits a peek at the way this city used to be, at around 8 at night, just 10 short years ago (nothing short about them). it stands to remind one that this is still a young, provincial city, where the streets roll up and don't unroll too much before the coming of the sun (apologies to the bakers, the pigs, the cabbies, and the newspaper hacks). i was wandering these same streets back when the boom was just a wet towel hung over tomorrows chair, and any job was a job worth having. its all gone over and become something to forget, but its still awful gorgeous at a quarter to 5...

so i'm walking and i have the downtown core to myself. almost. every 5 minutes another person asks me for change, (i haven't a pot to piss in) for a smoke (i haven't smoked in the day-time for years), some even try to sell me coupons, but to no avail. this can happen in broad daylight here, the main difference being the reaction i get for my denials. every single one is pleasant, contrite, sorry they bothered me. i guess this early they haven't been subjected to the onslaught of personal abuse they are guaranteed to receive.

were there this many broke and broken people ten years ago? was i too self-involved to notice?
20 minutes of pure frozen hustle and i make the temp agency offices. 5 minutes after 5 and i'm 20th in line. (in the old days, i'd be here alone for at least an hour). i sign in, fill the forms and hide in my crosswords. the people are pouring in. twenty turns to thirty, thirty to forty. the room grows dank with morning breath and stale coffee. the stale coffee starts to work and the fidgeting begins. so do the bathroom runs (the bathroom here shares the same four walls as the waiting room, so the odor soon becomes unbearable), the return trips to the coffee machine, the noise levels leap. my arm is bashed, i'm hit up for smokes, my bag is repeatedly kicked, there is no escape from the din. i'm pulled up out of my salvation and forced to address the obvious around me.

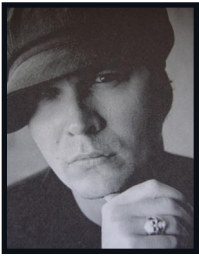
when i was a regular temp years ago, the crowd was almost always thin and always in rougher condition than i was. no matter my spot in line, i always got work. my apparent sobriety (which, often, was just thinly disguised functional alcoholism) and clean clothing guaranteed it. i suppose my youth didn't hurt my chances either. one real look around the room told me things here had changed as much as the streets i just came in on.

the overwhelming majority of the people sharing that room with me were clean cut, middle aged blue collar Joes, fully sober and equipped for the days labours (visi-vests, hard-hats, safety boots, cell phones, etc). most fingered résumé files while they waited for their names to be called. some phoned home to tells partners that there may be no work again today. the only dirt these folks had on was the residuals of dry-wall dust or engine grease from the previous days work. this was not the image most Calgarians have of the temp labour pool.

i've sat without work for weeks now, and i never thought i'd be down here, hustling for day labour again. i guess none of these people did. like me, they've washed out thru the boom grate as the weather goes foul and the outdoor jobs dry up. this is the real face of the recession. it's not about who can afford lattés at break, or SUVs when the lease runs about. it's about looking these people in the face, at 8 am, when they've sat for three hours, and telling them they'll be no work again today.

at least i can write about it to dull the hunger and the fear that this day has wrought upon me.

j. lives and works in Calgary's downtown core. he is busy writer and a prolific submitter. new pieces are currently running in *Inscribed*, *Germany's Blue Print Review* and, as always, the back pages of the *Street Newz*. his first two collections, *Death Day Erection* (2004) and *bulletin from the low light* (2006) are available on Frontenac House.



Riding the Green Dream Express

from Bridget and Kelly, in Saskatchewan

This past season has been an interesting ride on the green dream express.

On one hand we have accomplished a great deal. We spent time digging out a part of our basement so that we could support and straighten a sagging beam under our house. We liked the back-breaking work so much that we dug trenches around 3 sides of our house (3 ft deep and 2 ft wide) and sunk water proofed bales for basement insulation. This will hopefully alleviate the need to have the water turned off this winter, as well as provide the foundation for the next step.

We continued stacking bales up the walls of the house. We also built window boxes and replaced all our windows. Thankfully we can report that it is much easier to keep the house warm so far.

We also replaced our useless Canadian Tire power system with a much better quality system. This was accomplished with products and expert advice from Truewest Solar (www.truewest.ca). Yes, it works much better after \$4,000 investment but it is still small potatoes in terms of our energy needs.

This brings us to the other hand. It is really disconcerting that we would have to invest so much money and still not have adequate power. If you have seen a home powered by solar/wind with all the modern amenities, then likely these people have invested at least \$30 000 in their power system. The economic system does not value green choices.

The US government alone is expected to sink more than \$8 000 000 000 000 (yeah, thats trillions!) to 'rescue' an economic system that has contributed to unstoppable global warming, unprecedented species extinction, mass starvation, and endless wars.

But, that's another story. Back to the micro.

To do our work we need to be able to use our computer. One sunny day we used our multi media computer for 10 hours to work on a video project we're contracted for by the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate. That dropped the capacity in our batteries to below half and for the next few weeks we didn't have many sunny days to top them back up. So, we did without, sitting in the dark, burning up the last of our candles and struggling to see with generally useless, rechargeable LED lighting.

Thank goodness we can access email occasionally at the public library. And, we were also able to broker a deal with our neighbor to trade labour for electricity and a spot to plug in the work computer so we can keep going on the video contract. This is also disconcerting however, as we have to swallow our off-grid pride, basically

admitting defeat somewhat. If we use the work computer, and a light (approx 350 watts) for 8 hours a day, every day of the month we'd use roughly 84 kilowatts, or almost



3 kW/day. To purchase that much electricity from the grid at, say 10 cents/kW would only cost \$8.40, plus delivery charges etc. But, to purchase a solar electric system, not including gas generator back-ups, would mean an upfront outlay of approximately \$15 000. Again, this is still scant compared to most people's energy usage. And even then, given our experiences with batteries and solar panels, there's no guarantee that a \$15 000 would still be sufficient, let alone reliable everyday.

That said, we'd still gladly spend the dough (if we had it) to get a paltry 3 kW system. If we moved all our production needs to the laptop, we'd still have enough juice with 3kW/day to have light when we need it, power a small refrigerator, maybe some music or a movie from time to time, and run the occasional power tool during construction and renovations.

To top it all off, our home is covered in tarps to protect the insulating straw bales from getting wet. This seriously reduces our light and drives some of the town folk mad. We would have liked to get the bales properly covered by now but that would take more money and warm weather than we have left. Our apologies go out to those whose aesthetic values are challenged, and our deepest gratitude for the rest who understand and have stood up for us amid the resulting backlash.

All that said, this is quite the adventure and most of the time we have a good sense of humour about it. Since our 2008 EarthDay Film Festival (recently awarded recognition by RCE Saskatchewan) we haven't had much time to spend on our primary pursuit - bringing the public topical, relevant and independently produced media, and providing this free national email service.

In closing, if you too are a committed environmentalist we need and welcome your help. Come explore off-grid living; learn or improve your gardening or greenhouse skills; help plaster our walls or re-build the roof; eat healthy, local and mostly organic food cooked in a solar oven or atop our woodstove; explore and help build the eco-village; produce and promote multi-media, and stay for the massive yet exciting project of creating the boilingfrog multi-use space (find plans for that on our website too - boilingfrog.ca).



No Plan B

by Brian Mason

Our societies don’t end up with social, economic and political systems geared to confront crises, though we might hope they do. These systems are developed to manage our affairs on the assumption of a steady-state environment, where the future mostly resembles the present (and past) and change is incrementally slow. We might pay lip service to the constancy of change, but don’t actually live our lives as if that were the case. It could not conceivably be otherwise, else no one would ever get out of the starting gate – let alone their bed.

Consider war. From one perspective, the individual level, it’s a crisis – especially if it happened to be you stepping on the landmine – yet for many nations it represents a normal condition. The United States, for one, has been, in the pure Hobbesian sense, in a condition of war or extreme war-readiness ever since the Pilgrim Fathers arrived four hundred years ago. Be it civil unrest or attacking foreign powers, war is its natural way of being in the world.

More than that, threatening or waging war is a foundational principle for the United States, one that has been supremely good for business and wealth creation. It has fuelled the flame of patriotism in an endless, eager search for enemies (Islamic terrorists being only the most recent version) inside almost any foreign border, and at home. Whenever peace has briefly broken out, the United States became adrift, not knowing where to point its foreign policy or weapons, its research or corporations. At such moments, it has always quickly, almost seamlessly, acted to secure new targets so as to rebalance itself – with the president’s role as commander-in-chief being central to this long-running play. George W. Bush, remember, was at loose ends and abysmally low in the ratings polls before 9/11, clueless about domestic issues. War put him back in neutral gear. Those annoying, disruptive times of (relative) peace, not war, have been the American crisis.

Likewise, CEOs don’t earn their megabucks based on how well they handle the “unexpected,” whether unforeseen or entirely predictable: think General Motors, Lehman Brothers or any other presently melting-down corporation. Their executives are rewarded for managing within narrow, self-defined boundaries of success – according to formulae determined by colleagues from other corporations who sit on their boards. Catastrophes originating outside these limits are regarded as unnatural failures from beyond the pale. How, they might argue, can collapse be anticipated when one doesn’t seriously carry on as if it will ever actually occur.

Most socio-economic forecasting, when it is done at all, is conducted by looking in the rearview mirror. As long as the road most travelled continues in a more or less straight line, our systems can cope, and for a time even thrive. We stay on track. Throw in a spasm or two and see how quickly problems can escalate, our lives becoming unglued before our eyes. Complex systems, quickly overwhelmed, can collapse virtually overnight, even as they’ve been around developing slowly for decades. Complexity requires predictability and gradual incrementalism in order to prevail.

What of the current, so-called economic crisis? Our systems were caught off guard because they cannot anticipate, much less handle, a state of dis-equilibrium. Though market capitalism has always been its own worst tormentor – alternately becoming bloated then devouring itself in endless cycles of mania and gloom – we discount and ignore the business-cycle evidence of the past 150 years as we telescope on the present. Catastrophes in the past don’t get projected onto the current stage; collapses of complex societies are not considered imaginable today. Our presumption is towards equilibrium, a belief that tomorrow will resemble today, which is why we are perennially surprised by rapid change in circumstance. At such times, our entrenched systems prove inadequate to restore balance.

Social systems are incapable of learning from the past precisely because they have no active repository of social memory (with the possible exception of universities) that is integrated into current-day decision making. Worse yet, technology, as it tries to correct everything at the speed of light, is trampling whatever innate abilities we might have either to look ahead or to consider the lessons of the past. Even apparently slowly unfolding crises such as climate change – which, in fact, is playing out rapidly as these things go – befuddle our systems.

In spite of our endless searching for the next consumer spectacle, we rather collectively crave a sense of stability and security at all levels. We, in other words, expect our societies to deliver routine. As a result, our systems do more than aim for a steady-state: they assume that it already underlies the world, wrongly it would seem.

In the end, we truly have no Plan B to deal with (regularly occurring) “emergencies,” and that’s why we founder so quickly in rough waters. Against the weighty evidence of past catastrophes and collapse, we stubbornly cling to a doctrine of social inertia. But consider this sobering thought: of all species that have existed on Earth, 99.9 per cent are now extinct, and humans are the last fully bipedal hominin remaining. Watch your step.

Submitted by Brian Mason, a writer and philosopher living in James Bay.

Manufacturing Criminals

by C’daoim

Individuality is one of the most highly sought out qualities in our present characterization of civilized existence, but what does this mean to us?

We are willing to divide ourselves into classes and sub-classes as one expression of our ability to reach for this distinction. There must stand some truth in this observation because individuality is presently based on a comparison; with the idea of a status quo being the foremost measuring instrument.

Case in point, at present in Victoria a man named David Johnston is working his way through the legal process of defining what freedom of choice means, not intentionally, but nonetheless finding himself in a legal battle that will determine whether we can live outdoors if one so chooses (Mr. Johnston’s desire) or whether the government has the right to force a person to rent or own.

At the same time we have the homelessness situation where people are seeking affordable housing because they choose not to be living outdoors. They are the working poor, the disabled and elderly who have been forgotten due to the high quality and intense understanding of our civilized social order.

Our society appears not to believe that safe affordable housing should be built for people who are our fellow citizens, or at least that income should not have to meet the financial requirements of rental property. In this instance the problem created is that by giving the majority of a person’s income to meet their rental demands (in my case two thirds of 900 dollars a month) this requires that necessities such as food, clothing, heat, phone and cable must be overlooked for a person to claim the right of individuality. It would appear as though the battle is to define individuality.

I choose to believe that we all see some limits to these definitions such as not harming other citizens in any form. So why are we harming those who choose to have housing they can afford by not building this housing while at the same time holding another man (David Johnston) accountable for choosing not to have housing that we refuse to build for those that require it in the first place? Is this a leaders’ ship of fools hypocrisy demonstrated in the shallowest of terms???? Bah, said the sheeple when finding they were afraid to ask questions, mooove along said the shepherds of pretence.

It would seem that part of the definition of individuality could soon mean home owner, renter or criminal in our fair town. The problems created are that it is not always a personal choice as in Mr. Johnston’s case (he deserves the right to choose in a free society) and renting is unhealthy in cases of living on disability with little affordable housing available. (Try living with no heat or lights in the winter).

Our city hires more police, makes amendments to bylaws that have been struck down by the Supreme Court, allows charitable organizations to throw mats on their basement floors at certain temperatures and then manufactures criminals the next day when the temperature rises above freezing by putting these forgotten people in a dangerous and apparently a desired criminal arena - outdoors the next night.

Each one of us is responsible for this because we fail to rally behind a class we think should exist, poverty. Did I mention that there are drug addicts and alcoholics mixed in with these forgotten people and they are the only ones we hear about from the mainstream media and the police sound bites that are broadcast on the daily news? Well, at least we don’t hear about how we as a city have abandoned our elderly, disabled and working poor and really who would want to admit to that with all the shame and unconcern it demonstrates. Thankfully we don’t have to if we let the elected thinkers speak for us.

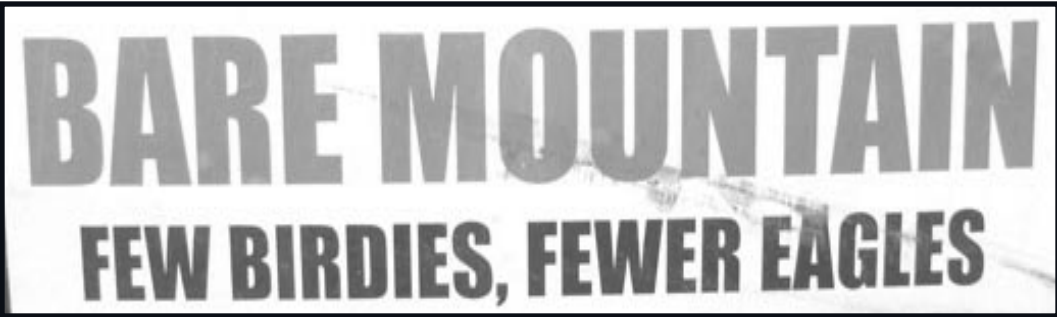
So now we must make some type of admission to ourselves so that we can tell the world how we see the poor in our society. Should we build some housing or no housing because some of the poor population are addicts and alcoholics? How about banning housing for all classes of citizens that have addictions inside of their class? It is far cheaper to house these affluent people in church basements and a mat, according to the grapevine, is very comfortable and offers the illusion of home sweet home according to our leaders’ points of view.

It is going to get very confusing once we start treating all classes with addicts inside of them as equal, so I’ve decided to take this opportunity to help my fellow citizens distinguish who these homeless people are (even the new affluent homeless because of their addictions) so that we can protect ourselves.

When you are walking down the street and notice someone wearing a long sleeved piece of apparel, look directly at their wrists. If you notice what appears to be a large bling-bling wristwatch hidden under their sleeve ask them the time. True bling would allow the person to give you the correct time, homeless people will only be wearing a thermometer (the round 12 inch kind) and if they tell you it is 1 degree Celsius they are criminal homeless people that have addicts within their class and so you should run. Yet don’t be too anxious to call a cop if you notice the thermometer but haven’t heard the temperature. If it is 0 degrees Celsius and you start a commotion you are the criminal because they have passed the test of innocence.

Yet I would suggest that you should be memorizing their faces because tomorrow the weather could improve and you have information on elderly, disabled and the working poor who are hiding behind thermometers to avoid their crimes.

Become Informed...Society Needs You



The Advocate: Defending our Rights

by W. Robert Arnold

I am afraid that we may be distracted by the death and carnage in other parts of the world from the quiet deaths that are happening in our own streets. Homeless and poor people are dying in the streets of Victoria mostly unannounced and unnoticed by the general population. Perhaps the problem is that it is not noisy or flashy like bombs and rockets.

It is a subtler violence that’s killing the vulnerable ones right in our midst. It is the violence of neglect. An uncaring provincial government does little about the problem and is ineffective in dealing with it. Its ministers speak of social housing and forcing people to use crowded and frightening shelters. Meanwhile, it does nothing about the real cause of the problem.

We don’t need affordable housing so much as we need people, who can afford housing. The government hopes to treat the symptoms while ignoring the main cause, which is poverty.

Having signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the provincial and federal governments have a duty to care imposed upon them by law. The wanton neglect they show the people who are dying in our streets, it can be argued, is actually criminal neglect causing death.

Here is a section from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 25.
(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his (sic) family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

That is pretty plain. Homeless people are not receiving their human rights. Another section from the same document is also quite important.

Article 30.
Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Once the governments have taken on the duty to care they must follow through with it and get rid of the conditions that are leading to the deaths of street people; or be seen as the cause of those deaths. By keeping welfare rates so low and denying them to so many people the government is actually destroying the rights and freedoms contrary to the very declaration they signed.

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights supports the view that the governments of British Columbia and of Canada are responsible for keeping people from dying in our streets.

Article 11
1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right. . .

I’ve seen the street people fighting for their right to sleep in tents in public spaces and I think they are asking for too little. In a country as rich as ours there is no need for tent cities. There is a need for justice so that people won’t have to sleep under a plastic sheet in a park because they have nowhere else to go.

Poor people have been asking for half a loaf for too long. It is time that we started to demand what we really want: an income that will allow us to live a normal life with decent food, proper shelter, warm clothing and some left over for our recreation. Asking for the right to pitch a tent is doing ourselves an injustice. According to the above mentioned documents we have the right to a decent standard of living. We must demand that the government live up to its duty and stop the death stalking our streets.

Robert is a 65 year old man who has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years. He is past president of the National Anti Poverty Organization.



Arrest the “Dangerous” Radicals!

by Gordon Pollard

With local police and elected officials seemingly so obsessed with “protecting” us from the dangers supposedly posed by homeless citizens and their supporters, I can’t understand why the police have not yet taken any action against one very dangerous, frightening-looking fellow I’ve seen wandering around in Victoria.

This scruffy-looking guy has long, straggly hair, a swarthy complexion and an intense, almost unearthly look in his eyes. Though he claims to be a carpenter by trade, I think he is clearly an idler and a trouble-maker.

I strongly suspect he is taking drugs since he is constantly spouting dangerous and delusional nonsense, uttering inane cries such as “Goodwill toward men,” “Truth and justice for all” and “Peace on Earth.” So totally estranged from reality is this character that he even believes the meek are going to inherit the Earth.

He apparently spends all his time drifting from town to town telling anyone who will listen about his cockeyed philosophy. He has no fixed address and has no visible means of support. It is even rumoured he was born in some stable.

People tell me this guy also has acquired a terrible reputation for trickery and deceit. Indeed, he is such a notorious conman that he apparently once even managed to convince some gullible citizens that he can turn water into wine.

No one seems quite sure what this fellow’s name is but I’ve been told he has been known to use a number of bizarre aliases such as “Saviour,” “Son of God,” “Prince of Peace,” and “Light of the World.”

I find it highly disturbing that a guy like this is being allowed to wander freely around in the streets of Victoria. Surely the last thing we need is some loony-bird who thinks he is a visionary going around stirring up trouble.

Moreover, I’ve sometimes seen this guy hanging around with some very unsavoury-looking companions, including a fiery-eyed, white-haired old man in a robe who is clearly delusional. In fact, this old fellow keeps making wild, preposterous claims about the special powers he says he possesses.

For example, he sometimes tells people that if the plight of the toiling masses on Vancouver Island were ever to become absolutely intolerable, he could save them by magically parting the waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca to allow them to flee to the mainland.

This strange old bird even claims he once climbed to the top of Mount Tolmie where, he says, a number of “commandments” were handed down to him on tablets. These so-called “commandments” are outrageously unrealistic. For example: “Thou shalt not lock up unoccupied buildings when homeless citizens in the street are dying from the cold and hunger,” “Thou shalt not have police waste time arresting the homeless and social activists instead of dealing with real criminals,” “Thou shalt not waste thousands of dollars appealing court decisions whenever they go against the interests of the rich and powerful,” and “Thou shalt not hand out lavish severance packages to disgraced police chiefs.”

When I last saw this weird old fellow, he was muttering something about a “burning bush” in Beacon Hill Park. Obviously the guy is completely off his rocker.

Clearly, the police should move quickly to arrest these dangerous characters before they can further infect the upstanding citizens of Victoria with any more of their foolishly radical, revolutionary ideas.

Gordon Pollard, who conducts opinion polls for “Victoria Street Newz” during federal and provincial elections, is a native of Victoria and has a BA from the University of Victoria and a MA from Columbia University in New York City. After working for 10 years as a journalist in BC, Alberta, and Ontario, Gordon spent 20 years teaching English and History in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and Sri Lanka.



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OUCH! Needlestick Injuries

by Joan King

I’m careful. Why should I worry?: Needlestick injuries happen when a needle punctures the skin. They happen when you least expect it. They can happen to anyone. The needle can be hollow or solid. It can go into your bloodstream or just pierce the skin. There is still a risk of infection.

Anne, a nurse, was collecting garbage left on an IV trolley. She was stabbed in the hand by a large needle. Needles can also hide amongst laundry. Barb, a paramedic, was stuck by an IV catheter. Charles was stuck by a push-button lancet for glucose testing, very dangerous, since they have more surface area than a needle, so they can carry more blood and tissue. David, an ambulance medic dealing with a car accident, placed his hands under a patient. He got stuck with a bloody piece of glass. Ellen, an aesthetician, was performing an extraction with a lancet. It slipped and stuck her right through her glove. Fred, a dentist, was stuck through his glove by a bloody explorer (those hooks they use). Somehow the instrument flipped around. He didn’t notice until he saw the tear in the glove. Gail, poked by a butterfly needle, was just trying to close the safety cap. Helen, a nurse, is short, and couldn’t see that the sharps container on the wall was full. Ivan was walking his dog, who found a burger wrapper and was devouring it. Ivan pulled the wrapper out, and had a close encounter with a syringe wrapped in it.

But what can happen to me?: Needlestick injuries can infect you with blood-borne viruses such as HIV/AIDS, HBV and HCV. With a contaminated needle, there is a 0.3% chance of getting HIV. The risk is greater if the person is terminal. There is up to 40% chance of getting HBV, and a 10% chance of getting HCV. There is more risk if the wound is deep, if you can see blood on the device, and if the wound reached a vein or artery. A syringe might contain dangerous drugs, as well. Other infections can occur. You can get diphtheria, gonorrhea of the skin, herpes, malaria, staph infections, TB, syphilis, and even fungi, to name a few you might recognize. A needlestick injury can be a traumatic event just because of the worry while you find out if you’re infected or not.

How can I prevent them?: Needles can stick you at any stage of use— injection, withdrawal, disassembly, or disposal. Risk factors include work conditions, the experience of the staff, the design of the equipment, and the type of procedure. The most common cause of needlesticks is not heeding Universal Precautions. (www.medstudent.ucla.edu/offices/sao/clinical/pdf/kdupform.pdf)

Safer work conditions: A good prevention program would include training and good guidelines, which would be implemented. It would include safety equipment (guarded needles, needle-free systems with self-sealing ports, re-sheathable needles, blunt suture needles, IV piggybacks). It would ensure that sharps containers are within reach and at eye level everywhere a needle is used. Over 80% of needlesticks could be prevented with the use of safer needle devices and needleless IV systems.

Training/education: Training should include education about risks, hazards, precautions, reporting procedures, and should include vaccination against Hep A and B. Safe recapping methods should be taught.

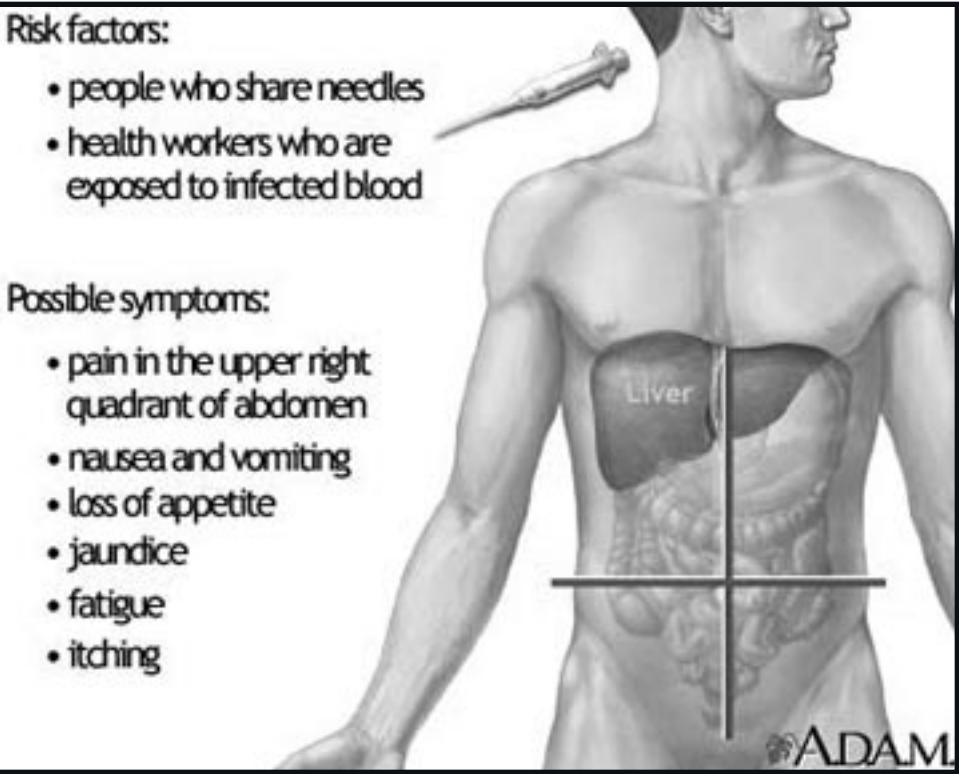
There should be good disposal systems (wide mouths; puncture-proof containers; frequent emptying; location close to work space; disposal according to regulations; staff reporting of needles found left around), surveillance (studies about rates of injuries; causes; treatment; areas to improve; development of strategies), and better device design for the future.

Problems occur when the worker tries to do several things at once, like covering the injection site and throwing away the syringe. The patient might bump the device. Staff reductions, difficult patients and working with dim light can produce dangerous conditions. It’s not surprising that new workers have more injuries than experienced workers.

Injection: The nurse should wash his/her hands before and after any procedure and between patients, and should use gloves and eye protection. Remember: Those butterfly needles are springy !

Withdrawal/disassembly: One of the most dangerous maneuvers is recapping a used needle. The needle can miss the cap and enter the hand, or the needle goes through the cap, into the hand, or the cap slips off the needle and pierces the hand. Nurses often recap to protect themselves when they take apart a non-disposable device. They recap when carrying several items to a disposal box in one trip, to protect themselves from exposed needles. They recap when the contents will be used again (hopefully in the same patient!). They recap to protect those encountered en route to the disposal box. It is recommended that workers NOT recap, but throw the devices directly into approved containers. Never move a needle towards a hand. If you must recap, use one hand and lay the cap on a table. Scoop it onto the tip of the needle, or use a recapping device.

Disposal: Once used, put the needle directly into the sharps container. Needlestick injuries can occur while carrying the needle to the container (especially if it’s uncapped or mixed with other items), while placing it in the container (especially if it’s too full), or while emptying the containers, instead of sealing them for disposal. Skin piercing injuries in cleaning staff usually come from needles thrown in regular garbage, or in garbage workers stuck by broken glass or trash that includes needles or scalpels. This may be due to lack of training, forgetfulness or lack of motivation of those throwing the items into the garbage. Dirty laundry should be handled as little as possible, and only while using gloves and leak-proof bags. People have been stuck while cleaning ducts and find needles that have been hidden, and unfortunately, the people weren’t wearing leather gloves.



If you work in an ambulance, decide now to not touch anything in the back without gloves until you personally have cleaned it. You never know what might have blood on it. Staples and glue should be used instead of sutures for wound closure.

If you encounter a syringe, don’t touch it. It may be contaminated with body fluids, animal fluids, or soil (possible source of tetanus). Guard the area, especially if children are nearby. Call the non-emergency number for the police to find out who can dispose of it safely. If it’s your own needle, put it into a sturdy container and close it with tape. Take it to your pharmacy or clinic.

How common are they?: “According to a recent report, more than one million needlestick injuries to health care workers occur every year.” At least 1000 of those contract infections. Some hospitals say that one third of their staff members get needlesticks each year, but many probably don’t report these incidents. A report from the Canadian Needle Stick Surveillance Network (CNSSN) presented data from 2000-2001, showing that 52% of needlesticks were injuries to nurses, but their infection rate was only 4.88%, compared to a 42.78% infection rate per injury in phlebotomists, almost 21% in medical residents, 13.59% in nuclear medical technicians, 12.14% in sterilization attendants, and 10.06% in medical specialists.

Too late. I got stuck. What should I do?: First make sure no one else is exposed by cleaning up any blood. Wash skin wounds with soap and warm water for at least 30 seconds and cover. Allow the wound to bleed but don’t squeeze or scrub. That could spread the disease. Wash the eyes or mouth if they have been exposed to body fluids. Notify your superiors and a doctor. Don’t think it’s not important. Many workers are embarrassed or afraid to blame another worker. Delayed reports mean delay in evaluation and treatment. You may need to prove the workplace injury later on. If possible, collect blood from the patient, with informed consent, whether you were exposed or the patient was, in order to prove lack of infection before the injury. Get tested immediately, and after the incubation period. If possible, get the patient tested. He/she may have more than one infection. Hopefully you’ve had vaccines against Hep A and B. You may need a dose of Hep B immunoglobulin and/or a tetanus vaccination. If you’ve been exposed to HIV or HCV, treatment should be started. If the risk of HIV is probable, treatment is best started within 1 hour, reducing the risk by 80%. Get counselling, for you and for your partner if you have to start treatment. Get information about your workplace policies. Take extra precautions until you know your status.

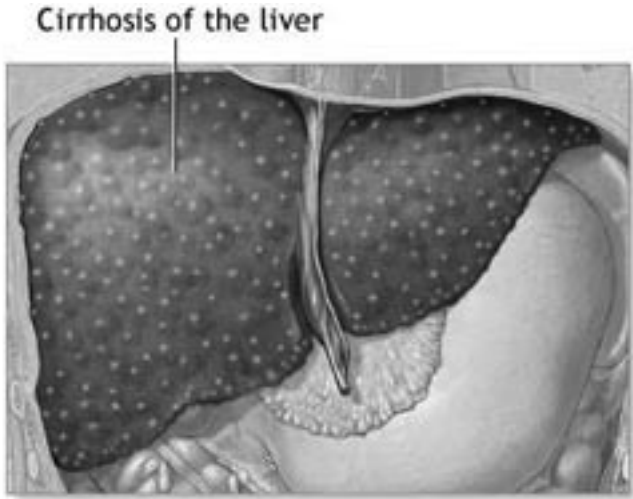
Should you change professions? Car accidents are always a risk, but you don’t stop driving. Even if you get injured, a serious infection is not usual.

Sources: www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/needlestick_injuries.html, www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/, www.impactnurse.com/?p=334, http://access.health.qld.gov.au/hid/InfectionsandParasites/SexuallyTransmittedDiseases/accidentalNeedleStickInjuryInPublicPlaces_ap.asp, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Needle-Stick-Injury---Who-Bears-the-Brunt?&id=1419149>

Jessica Chan is the Executive Director of HepCBC - the Hepatitis C Education and Prevention Society (www.hepcbc.ca) - a non-profit organization that strives to educate about and prevent Hepatitis C.

photos are from www.nlm.nih.gov:

“Your liver helps fight infections and cleans your blood. It also helps digest food and stores energy for when you need it. You cannot live without a liver that works. Cirrhosis has many causes. In the United States, the most common causes are chronic alcoholism and hepatitis.”





Offering Solidarity and Support for Palestine

from Robert Massoud, Zatoun.com

Every Palestinian has become a prisoner. Gaza is surrounded by an electrified fence on three sides: imprisoned like animals, Gazans are unable to move, unable to work, unable to sell their vegetables or fruit, unable to go to school. They are exposed from the air to Israeli planes and helicopters and are gunned down like turkeys on the ground by tanks and machine guns. Impoverished and starved, Gaza is a human nightmare.

Hope has been eliminated from the Palestinian vocabulary so that only raw defiance remains.

Palestinians must die a slow death so that Israel can have its security, which is just around the corner but cannot be realized because of the special Israeli "insecurity." The whole world must sympathize, while the cries of Palestinian orphans, sick old women, bereaved communities, and tortured prisoners simply go unheard and unrecorded. Doubtless, we will be told, these horrors serve a larger purpose than mere sadistic cruelty. After all, "the two sides" are engaged in a "cycle of violence" that has to be stopped, sometime, somewhere. Once in a while we ought to pause and declare indignantly that there is only one side with an army and a country: the other is a stateless dispossessed population of people without rights or any present way of securing them. The language of suffering and concrete daily life has been either hijacked or so perverted as, in my opinion, to be useless except as pure fiction deployed as a screen for the purpose of more killing and painstaking torture - slowly, fastidiously, inexorably.

That is the truth of what Palestinians suffer.

The late Edward Said wrote these words in August 2002. How can it be that his words remain accurate six years later?



The week's events in Gaza have overshadowed whatever joy or peace one can have at this special time of year. However the resounding demonstrations around the world have helped give us some relief from helplessness. Apart from these acts of public outcry at the terrible suffering in Gaza, we in North America feel powerless, without means to oppose the moral bankruptcy of bombing densely-populated areas with impunity or our governments who positively approve of it with similar disregard for civilians and ongoing suffering.

Zatoun has been sent direct donations for Gaza and received inquiries for organizations able to lend immediate aid in this most recent crisis. Zatoun is not set up to accept funds for emergency humanitarian aid and has no means to get them to Gaza, quickly and efficiently.

In Canada:

- The Canadian Red Cross (www.redcross.ca) - no specific Gaza Appeal page online - donors can specify "ICRC Gaza Response" at the end of donation form.
- Islamic Relief (www.islamicreliefcanada.org)
- UNWRA - United Nations Works Relief Agency (www.un.org/unrwa).

Revenue Canada recognizes donations made to UN agencies even if outside Canada.

In Canada, the Palestinian Child Sponsorship Program (www.cpfq.org/child) supports children in Gaza. Established in 1999, it provides desperately needed financial assistance and hope to needy Palestinian children and their families living in the West Bank and Gaza. The program operates similarly to "Foster Plan" providing updates and communication with the child and their family. Donations are tax-receiptable in Canada.



Zatoun's work is of a different kind with a long time horizon. One that has to do with trees, farmers and livelihoods - things that grow slowly and build enduring roots for genuine understanding towards peace.

Our mission is to create experience, awareness, and healing in North America using olive oil from Palestine. Necessarily this focus keeps us outside the daily fray - however horrible the events might be. Zatoun may be silent at the level of direct advocacy however we support the people of Palestine and especially in Gaza at this time.

To help Zatoun supporters wishing to donate directly at this time of dire need, we offer the following organizations for your consideration. They are ready to accept your contributions (and provide a receipt for income tax purposes) and able to direct funds to humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Many offer online, telephone and mail options.

In the United States:

- American Near East Refugee Aid (www.anera.org)
- United Palestinian Appeal (www.helpupa.com)
- Islamic Relief (www.irw.org)

You may like to know that Zatoun has been helping in Gaza for the past three years. Zatoun has sold about \$8,000 of small embroidery items and pottery made by people living in Gaza. These items have been sold mostly at fairs and event tables (not available for online ordering). The beautiful items (bracelets, bookmarks, glass cases, sachets, etc.) are made by the parents and students attending The Atfaluna School for Deaf Children (www.atfaluna.net) which provides sign language schooling, hearing aids and services as well as vocational training to the deaf in Gaza.

In closing, Zatoun wishes immediate relief to the people of Gaza and a peaceful future for all.

For more information contact Robert - info@zatoun.com; www.zatoun.com (in Victoria, Zatoun oil is available at 10,000 villages on Oak Bay Ave).

Photos from Victoria's January 10th rally: top right from Pete Rockwell, the other three from Christina Nikolic. bottom: A demonstrator chants during a protest against the Israeli attacks on Gaza at Trafalgar Square in London January 3, 2009. REUTERS/Luke MacGregor (BRITAIN)

Dear Couz,

The Tsulquate situation, is it a tragedy in the making?

by Jennifer Hastie

I wonder if they’ve started to fix the mold problem.

Yes, Couz, I am referring to the terrible conditions of the houses on a small reserve near Port Hardy.

How many times have we seen our native people caught between the bureaucracy of the feds and that of the province? It happens all the time, an easy way for both governments to wiggle out of stepping up to the plate to do something for our natives simply because it costs too much money.

Too much to protect a child from harm?

Too much to give proper support and help so that our natives can get back on their feet?

How much does the bureaucrat really care about others? Sure, our legislation and policies might look good on paper. However, when it comes to the treatment of individual cases, well, that might be a different matter, especially if it means making a late phone call or cutting a few minutes from your noon hour to finish a job--all you office workers know about that.

Yes, I know, Couz, you would be first to point out that the natives should be handling things themselves, with their own money. Ideally, that is the case. However, let us not forget the enormous impact of colonization on the native peoples. Let us not forget the insidious effect from years of being told “I know what’s best for you.” That’s a great method of creating chronic dependency for not just the native, but for anyone who has to live on any form of income assistance.

Let us not forget the terrible effects of the physical and sexual abuse from the Residential School system on our native peoples. Let us not forget the resulting depression and the grief that hit parents when their children were taken from them.

With our track record here in Canada, we have a debt to pay, and that means putting more money into housing and services on reserves for native peoples so that they can heal from all of this.

We worry about money. Who is going to pay for better housing on the Tsulquate reserve? Our provincial government is not prepared to do anything except take the children away because the feds are “supposed to pay” for housing on reserve. The feds do a marvellous job at skirting that one: child protection issues are a provincial responsibility.

Do you see, Couz, where the natives get screwed? This situation with the Tsulquate reserve is only one of many that have cropped up over the years on other reserves, most of which we never hear of.

All of us who have worked in or alongside “the system” know that the Ministry for Children and Families finds it easier to simply apprehend children who live on isolated reserves rather than place support systems in place for the families

or, in this case, make sure that the run-down housing gets fixed. Many are quick to blame those people living in the housing, perhaps not realizing that the standard of housing and the numbers of houses to begin with was probably low and unsuitable for the conditions in the first place. Why was it so sub-standard? Why of course, it comes down to cost and of course, the feds have a budget that must be kept.

This tendency to apprehend children for substandard housing really gets to me. Child abuse issues may be one thing, but when a social worker takes a child away because of substandard housing or crowded conditions or lack of material things, then that’s another thing. This terrible practice that many of us have seen through the years amounts to a whole lot of value judgments being made by the social worker, resulting in a whole lot of bad decisions.

Frequently, when a child is apprehended under these conditions, the assumption is that the child will be away from his or her family for just a little while. However, Temporary care becomes Permanent care. Parents can’t get down from the reserve to visit with the children. Some parents find the formidable set of rules around visiting simply too unnerving to cope with. Often children from the same family are put in more than one foster home. Any parent who has had to visit his child in a strange home knows how awkward and unsatisfactory the visit is, even if the home is sensitive to the parents’ plight. And so, the family ties get broken.

And the kid “looks happy” when the social worker comes to visit. He looks cleaner. He has access to better medical care. His marks at school may improve. He “seems” to be part of the new family. We’ll just leave that kid there, says the social worker to him or herself. And so he is left.

Then, one day a few years down the road, that kid begins “causing trouble.” Or she runs away to the streets. Or he shuns his native roots and family. And so, it becomes apparent that damage, often permanent, has been done, a tragedy in the making that was unnecessary.

Do we want lower child welfare bills? Keep those kids out of care. It costs far more to keep children in care in a foster home than to keep them at home with community services to support the family. Improve the housing conditions on reserve. Quit squawking about who should pay and get the job done, even if it means getting the work done first and then billing the feds later.

The Usma program, the first of its kind in B.C., responsible for child welfare on the Nuu-chah-nulth reserves since about 1989, has seen their numbers of children-in-care go down in the past few years. The Usma provides services to parents and has regular contact with their reserves. They also deal with people in a much less authoritarian way. It is so important to get to know someone first before you try to deal with difficult issues around child welfare. Simply swooping down and scooping the children makes everyone lose.

Finally, Ministry of Children and Families, learn to work cooperatively with the feds on an on-going basis so that this tragedy that I’ve outlined, this tragedy that happens to families over and over again, will eventually be reduced and hopefully, eventually, eliminated.

Jennifer and her husband live in Victoria today. She is a healthy, active senior who enjoys writing volunteer articles for various publications.



Canadian mining company vs rural Spanish community

by Moraia Grau

As Canadians, we might want to ask ourselves: “Is it OK for large Canadian companies to try to force their interests, specially in foreign countries, against the will of local governments and communities?” Small communities often have fewer resources to stand up against these powerfull commercial interests, so shouldn’t we be lending them our support?

Lundin Mining Corporation, a large Canadian mining company based in Vancouver, BC, may be just such a company. Lundin is in the process of being amalgamated with HudBay Minerals Inc., having previously bought Narcea Gold Mines Ltd. in August 2007, and thus the mining rights and investments of the latter in a gold mining project in Tapia de Casariego - Salave (Asturias, Spain).

The Salave project is under judiciary investigation, since Narcea Gold Mines asked for compensation from the regional government of Asturias (Spain) for rejecting its proposal to start an open-pit gold mine. The proposed site is in a rural area, 500 metres from the coast and near the village of Tapia de Casariego, a summer tourist destination.

The economy is based on agriculture, cattle raising, small local products manufacturing, services and tourism, and the unemployment rate is low (4 per cent). When the gold mine was proposed in 2005, people of the various communities affected (Mántaras, Salave, Campos, Valdeparés, Porcía and Tapia de Casariego) united and voiced their opposition to the project. They neither needed nor wanted a gold mine in their back yard.

From the experience in other Asturian communities, local people knew that a gold mine would create a few jobs for a few years but would change the

landscape and the quality of their environment permanently.¹

The regional government responded to the local opposition and denied the permit on the grounds that the present Natural Resources Land Management Plan of Asturias, designed to protect and maintain natural habitats and species, did not allow a mining development in the area. However, the company decided to challenge the regional government and asked for compensation of US \$200 million.

If the company succeeds in its law suit, its four directors would receive 6 per cent of the compensation sum awarded (i.e., US \$12 million or US \$3 million per director). This is the kind of economic game and gain that have brought us to the present world crisis.

Under the pressure of the impending trial, Lundin Mining has presented a new gold mine proposal based on underground galleries, and the local communities are once again threatened.

The autonomous region of Asturias, with a population of about one million, has limited resources to protect its rights. If multinational mining companies can threaten rural communities in Spain, which is a member country of the European Union, one can only imagine what might happen in developing countries, where widespread human rights abuses and corrupt governments leave citizens defenseless against the destruction of their environment by mining companies.

Since approximately 85 per cent of all gold extracted is used for jewellery, we need to consider



and rethink the effects of our taste for gold.

¹ Gold mining is one of the most polluting types of mining due to the use of cyanide for gold extraction and to the large volume of waste material generated. The usual cut-off grade is one gram of gold (approximately the weight of a ring) per tonne of waste. In the Salave project the initial waste produced has been estimated at 18 million tonnes.

Pictures of the area are available at www.tapiadecasariego.com/galeriafotos.asp. Personal pictures available upon request for the proposed mining site, and for the Lundin Mining Corp. Carlés gold mine, Asturias, Spain.

See campaign “No dirty gold” at www.nodirtygold.org and www.earthworksaction.org

Moraia Grau is a Victoria biologist specializing on river ecology, and temporarily living in Tapia de Casariego (Asturias), Spain.



SEA GODDESS

She emerged from the belly of the sea fully grown
A primordial being she thought herself a goddess
But found she was merely a woman with an imagination.
She could, however, unearth the future
Waiting in the wings, a monument to wishful thinking.
I felt her lips on my finger tips
Waking me from a sleep immersed in the centuries
Between birth and death, replayed as a fractal in time
Old age returning to filter memory
Like a passing thought noticed before waking
Or a soft summer breeze felt
Illusive and prone to enchantment.
Awake I saw her transformed by the spectre of war
Raped and violated.
Chaos seeded remorse
Her hair tangled
Her clothes torn.
In a naïve retreat to the past
She then collapsed to sleep
A waning moon her backdrop.
I saw her anguish from another shore
Whispered solace into the wind
A kindred spirit pressured to act.
She reemerged a singular image
Vowed a come back in the surging tide
There she gathered her hair in bundles
Removed the tangled nests
One by one letting them drop out of sight
Regret followed as if tied to those knots.
She removed her torn clothes
Wrapped the vengeance brought forth
From the depths of the nightmare
And flung them into the abyss.
Se washed herself with the dew of the morning
Warmed by the rising sun.
Nakedness became her dress
Understanding her strength
She knew she would survive.
Not bound by a single notion or a narrow mind
She found her voice in an expanding universe
Limitless in possibility.
She touched me again as before
This time my awakening was to stretch
beyond the present moment
To see deeply the meaning butterflies bring
When their wings touch the fabric of space
And we the breadth of time.

by Judy Sigmund who wrote: It is dedicated to those of you working so hard to eliminate homelessness and the harassment of those who are.

In Memoriam

Thanks to Angela, from the Our Place Society, for providing last month's list of some of the Street Family who passed in 2008.

Street Newz believes it's important to acknowledge and honour the lives of those who die from the violence of poverty.

We contacted Angela in early January, for an update on the street deaths to be acknowledged in the February Street Newz,, and she wrote:

“Nothing to report at this time... will let you know if anything changes.”

If you've lost a friend or family member to the streets, please consider writing a few words about them and submitting those via email (streetnewz@islandnet.com) or leave them in our mailbox at 1027 Pandora Ave.



(artwork, above, from Lyn X, editor of Edmonton's 'Our Voice' newspaper)

my song

there is no do
there really really isn't
there is nothing more important than not letting craziness to pervade
that says there is no sleeping during the day
there is no do
I did not choose to know this
by luck/fate my ego was inspired to love truth
there is no freedom along side the enforcement of wakefulness
all else is frivolous
not because I say so
I get spat on for knowing there is no just excuse for fear...
or more, I get spat on for preaching there is no just excuse for fear
put your life on the line somewhere
Somewhere
when there is no freedom
when there is no freedom put your life on the line
all else is frivolous and excuses
all else is Hell

easy for me to say
screaming at the wind
there is no strategic way around the devil
there is only patience to the end of mortality

nothing else matters
there is no bribing fate
peace is just on the other side of complete insanity
nothing to lose
our lives are not our own
there is no do
forever
there is no do
take comfort
there is no do
there is no evil
there is no do
nothing to fear
nothing
enjoy death being better than a lifetime of discomfort
for freedom and for sanity
my life is on the line
we'll see what happens in the next 5 seconds... maybe

david arthur johnston

Words from a Street Newz Vendor

I am on the “Canadian Pension Plan for Disabilities & PWD, for many years. I have many Medical Issues. I have deteriorated in the last 2 years. My walking is limited & now I need a scooter, to move around. The scooter has become my life line. To go to my medical appointments, shopping, socializing, and the list is long. I depend upon my son Robert & my daughter Leya & my sister Jeannette, to take me shopping & to do other things. I also have a Parking Permit, for PWD. And as time goes by, I will not get better or improve health wise.

I been making jewelry for many years. That was not enough to supplement my income. So I approached John, from Victoria Street Newz, to sell the paper last December. Between the Jewelry & the Street Newz, it helps me to supplement my income. The reason it costs me so much to survive every month, I am allergic to 80 % of the food on the Market. Plus I am allergic to a lot of the supplements. So I am always changing my diet & buying fresh daily. The food allergies run in our family. Plus the cost of food has gone through the roof, the cost of supplements have gone through the roof. Also, I have to pay someone to come in & help me with housecleaning, here & there. So it adds up. I been fortunate to have low cost housing, in a senior complex. I was once on a waiting list also for housing.

The Victoria Street Newz is an excellent newspaper. There is up to date information on local issues, global issues, poems, advertising, different articles from the street population & etc. It is educational & interesting. Also amusing. Many people love the paper & support the paper. The paper needs funding or a grant to survive. If I lose the chance to sell the paper, by the paper shutting down, I lose an income to support myself, plus it will have another negative effect, my life line to the community will disappear by 70%, because I meet friends, make new friends, when I sell the paper. The customers that support me are excellent, supportive & very understanding. My customers provide me with an income.

I learn a lot from my customers, they advise me on a lot of daily issues, where to get bargains or what is happening in the community. Plus we chit chat a bit also. It is very healthy for me & others to have this newspaper survive. I want to thank my customers, for supporting me, on my Jewelry & Newspaper.

So if you look at the whole picture involving this paper you can see the impact it has on my life & other vendors. And the community.

Chu! Old Eagle Eyes (Andre Motuz)



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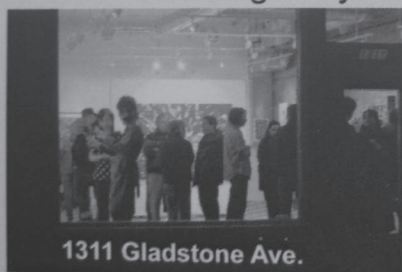
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Ted Shirley Sean Rick Rose Richard Ken



John Joe John Earl Dallas Debbie Bernie

All us at the Victoria Street Newz extend our sincere gratitude to the Cooperators, and individual supporters who sustain this autonomous and independent alternative newz project.

WHERE YOUR \$\$\$\$ GOES

Vendors pay 50 cents for each Street Newz (to pay the printer); whatever you give them is theirs to keep.

There's one salaried Coordinator who produces the Newz. No overhead, no extraneous expenses.



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Street Newz Revenue	Nov	Dec	Jan
Paper Sales (from vendors)	501.50	663.00	553.50
Donations	200.00	225.00	2740.00
Gifts (incl in-kind)	300.00	100.00	860.00
Advertising	400.00	0.00	0.00
Subscriptions	245.00	355.00	460.00
Bread & Roses Donation to SNZ	700.00	800.00	800.00
Total Street Newz Revenue	2346.50	2143.00	5413.50
Street Newz Expenses			
Salaries	700.00	800.00	800.00
Paper & Printing Costs	565.95	582.75	565.95
Office expenses/website	16.00	16.00	16.00
Postage	52.88	42.61	44.31
Total Street Newz Expenses	1334.83	1441.36	1426.26
Street Newz	1011.67	701.64	3987.24
Bread & Roses Revenue			
Grants	0.00	0.00	9500.00
Total Bread & Roses Revenue	0.00	0.00	9500.00
Bread & Roses Expenses			
Bus Tickets (2 for 1)	40.50	40.50	40.50
Street Newz Donation	700.00	800.00	800.00
Total Bread & Roses Expenses	740.50	840.50	840.50
Bread & Roses	-740.50	-840.50	8659.50
Consolidated Ttl (SNZ + B&R)	271.17	-138.86	12646.74
Bread & Roses Bank Balance	58.34	-417.62	11176.95